

学校编码: 10384

分类号_____密级_____

学号: 11120051300280

UDC_____

廈門大學

硕士学位论文

**A Study of Coherence in English Writing
by Use of the Given-new Contract and Topical
Structure Analysis**

英语写作连贯的新旧信息契约和主题结构研究

刘云洲

指导教师姓名: 傅似逸 教授

专业名称: 英语语言文学

论文提交日期: 2008 年 4 月

论文答辩时间: 2008 年 月

学位授予日期: 2008 年 月

答辩委员会主席: _____

评 阅 人: _____

2008 年 4 月

厦门大学博硕士论文摘要库

厦门大学学位论文原创性声明

兹呈交的学位论文，是本人在导师指导下独立完成的研究成果。本人在论文写作中参考的其他个人或集体的研究成果，均在文中以明确方式表明。本人依法享有和承担由此论文而产生的权利和责任。

声明人（签名）：

年 月 日

厦门大学博硕士论文摘要库

本人完全了解厦门大学有关保留、使用学位论文的规定。厦门大学有权保留并向国家主管部门或其指定机构送交论文的纸质版和电子版，有权将学位论文用于非赢利目的的少量复制并允许论文进入学校图书馆被查阅，有权将学位论文的内容编入有关数据库进行检索，有权将学位论文的标题和摘要汇编出版。保密的学位论文在解密后适用本规定。

1、保密 ()，在 年解密后适用本授权书。

(请在以上相应括号内打“√”)

导师签名: 日期: 年 月 日

厦门大学博硕士论文摘要库

Synopsis

“Coherence” generally refers to the relationships that link the ideas in a text to create meaning for the readers. It has often been considered as a vague and complicated concept. In spite of the complex nature of coherence, it has aroused great interest among the linguists and writing researchers. Currently, there are mainly two different orientations in the study of coherence: text-based and reader-based. Some linguists claimed that it is the writer who constructs and orders the information in the first place. In this sense, coherence can thus be defined as a feature of the text. However, more recent psychological and pragmatic researches have suggested that coherence is not irrelevant to the reader’s interpretation and that it depends on successful interaction between the reader and the text. In other words, the text and the readers both have a role to play in the construction of coherence.

Considerable amount of research has been conducted on the issue of coherence over the past few decades, there are, however, few theories proposed that can be practically applied to the teaching of writing in terms of improving coherence in students compositions.

For the two reasons mentioned above, this paper has taken coherence as a research issue and aims at improving student writing through using the concepts of the Given-new Contract and Topical Structure Analysis as tools to revise the draft. The Given-new Contract, also known as the known-new contract, refers to a linguistic phenomenon that most often the given information is found at the beginning of a sentence, while the new tends to follow afterwards, and the new information of a sentence often becomes the given of the subsequent sentence. Topical Structure Analysis refers to the study of topical development in a text by examining semantic relationships between sentence topics and the discourse topic.

It has been proved by previous studies that in English, the given information tends to occur before the new information and the Given-new Contract conforms to the

expectation of the reader, enabling the reader to process information more efficiently from sentence to sentence and creating reader-based coherence. In this sense, the contract can well connect the information between sentences and establish local coherence as a result. Nevertheless, a coherent text requires coherence not only at the sentence level but also at the text level. For this reason, Topical Structure Analysis is adopted to investigate the topical development of a whole text by employing three major topical progressions: parallel, sequential and extended parallel.

The primary focus of the present paper is to find and analyze the various devices that can help to keep the Given-new Contract for realization of coherence at the sentence level. It also aims at verifying the topical progression proposed by earlier scholars and accounting for the varied topical progression used in different texts.

For such research purpose, the present paper focuses on the discussion of devices at two levels: lexical and syntactic. Lexical devices include repetition, referential pronouns, substitution, conjunction and words of other semantic relations. Syntactic devices include passivization, cleft-sentences and propositional phrases. The paper also elaborates on the specific use of topical progressions, such as parallel, sequential, extended parallel and extended sequential progression in different types of writing.

Through the analysis of the specific devices to maintain the Given-new Contract and the discussion of the use of topical progression in different types of writing, the present study has verified the effective use of these two tools. Moreover, it has further explored their applications to the EFL writing and provides a new perspective to the studies of teaching writing.

Key words: EFL writing; coherence; the Given-new Contract; Topical Structure Analysis

摘要

‘连贯’通常指连接话语或句子含义的种种关系，旨在为读者创造有意义的语篇。它常常被视为一种模糊、复杂的概念。然而‘连贯’这一概念却引起了许多语言学家和写作专家的兴趣。目前，有关‘连贯’的研究有两种不同的观点：立足于语篇本身，或立足于读者。前者认为语篇是由作者构建、安排信息的顺序，因此连贯可视为语篇本身所具有的特征。然而近来心理学和语用学的研究表明语篇是否连贯与读者对话篇的理解有关，连贯在某种意义上可以说是取决于读者与语篇有效的互动。

在过去的几十年里，已有相当数量的关于‘连贯’的研究。然而这些研究所提出的理论很少可以实际运用到英语作为外语的写作教学，或用于指导学生改善写作语篇整体的连贯性。

鉴于以上原因，本文将以连贯作为研究主题，探讨如何运用‘新旧信息契约’和‘主题结构分析’理论，来指导学生修改初稿，提高语篇整体的连贯性。所谓‘新旧信息契约’，指的是在一个句子里，已知信息通常出现在句子的前半部分，而新信息则出现在句子的后半部分，即整个句子呈现出“已知信息+新信息”的信息结构。‘主题结构分析’是指通过考察句子主题和语篇主题之间的语意关系来分析整个语篇主题的发展。

‘新旧信息契约’妥善地连接了句子之间的信息，构成了局部的连贯。然而连贯的语篇不仅需要局部的连贯，更需要语篇的全局连贯。因此，本文采用了主题结构分析，找出了主题发展的三种主要模式：并立式、承接式以及延伸并立式，来考察整个语篇的主题发展。

本文着重探讨在词汇和句法层次上实现‘新旧信息契约’的手段，而主题结构分析则以论述主题发展模式在不同语体中的具体使用为重点。

本文旨在通过分析‘新旧信息契约’和主题发展模式在不同语体中的使用，阐述二者作为写作修改工具的可行性和有效性。同时，本文也探索了这两种理论在英语作为外语的写作教学中的应用，为英语写作教学提供新的视角。

关键词：英语写作；连贯；新旧信息契约；主题结构分析

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter One Overview of Studies on Coherence.....	6
1.1 The theories on coherence.....	6
1.1.1 The definition of coherence.....	6
1.1.1.1 Text-oriented coherence.....	6
1.1.1.2 Reader-oriented coherence.....	7
1.1.2 The relationship between cohesion and coherence.....	8
1.2 Approaches to the study of coherence.....	9
1.2.1 Text-based approach.....	9
1.2.1.1 Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion.....	9
1.2.1.2 Macrostructure.....	11
1.2.1.3 The Rhetorical Structure Theory.....	13
1.2.1.4 Metadiscourse.....	13
1.2.2 Reader-based approach.....	16
1.2.2.1 The pragmatics approach.....	16
1.2.2.2 The theory of relevance.....	18
1.2.2.3 The psychological approach.....	19
1.3 Summary	19
Chapter Two The Analytical Framework of the Study.....	21
2.1 The Given-new Contract.....	21
2.1.1 The definition of the Given-new Contract.....	21
2.1.2 Information structure.....	22
2.1.3 Some similar notions and their difference.....	23
2.1.4 The Given-new Contract and its relationship to coherence.....	25
2.1.5 Strategies to keep the Given-new Contract.....	26
2.1.5.1 Lexical devices.....	26
2.1.5.2 Syntactical devices.....	29
2.2 Topical Structure Analysis.....	34

2.2.1 Essential concepts.....	35
2.2.1.1 The notion of topic.....	35
2.2.1.2 Sentence topic and discourse topic.....	36
2.2.2. Topical progression.....	37
2.2.3. Topical Structure Analysis and its relationship to coherence.....	39
2.3 Summary.....	40
Chapter Three An Investigation of Coherence through the Given-new Contract and Topical Structure Analysis.....	42
3.1 Research purpose.....	42
3.2 Methodology and data collection.....	42
3.2.1 Methodology.....	43
3.2.1.1 Methods for checking the Given-new Contract.....	43
3.2.1.2 Methods for conducting Topical Structure Analysis.....	43
3.2.2 Data collection.....	45
3.3 Analysis of data.....	45
3.3.1 Devices to keep the Given-new Contract.....	45
3.1.1.1 Lexical devices.....	45
3.1.1.2 Syntactic devices.....	52
3.3.2 Topical Structure Analysis.....	54
3.3.2.1 Topical progression in description.....	58
3.3.2.2 Topical progression in narration.....	61
3.2.2.3 Topical progression in exposition.....	63
3.2.2.4 Topical progression in argumentation.....	65
3.4 Summary.....	67
Conclusions.....	69
Appendix.....	73
References.....	99
Acknowledgements.....	102

目 录

引言	1
第一章 连贯研究的理论综述	6
1.1 连贯理论	6
1.1.1 连贯定义	6
1.1.1.1 立足于语篇的连贯	6
1.1.1.2 立足于读者的连贯	7
1.1.2 衔接与连贯的关系	8
1.2 关于连贯的研究	9
1.2.1 以语篇为基础的连贯研究	9
1.2.1.1 韩理德和哈桑的衔接理论	9
1.2.1.2 宏观结构理论	11
1.2.1.3 修辞结构理论	13
1.2.1.4 元话语	13
1.2.2 以读者为基础的连贯研究	16
1.2.2.1 语用学	16
1.2.2.2 关联理论	18
1.2.2.3 心理学	19
1.3 小结	19
第二章 本研究的理论框架	21
2.1 新旧信息契约	21
2.1.1 新旧信息契约定义	21
2.1.2 信息结构	22
2.1.3 相似概念以及之间的不同点	23

2.1.4 新旧信息契约与连贯的关系.....	25
2.1.5 实现新旧信息契约的手段.....	26
2.1.5.1 词汇手段.....	26
2.1.5.2 句法手段.....	29
2.2 主题结构分析.....	34
2.2.1 相关概念.....	35
2.2.1.1 主题.....	35
2.2.1.2 句子的主题和语篇的主题.....	36
2.2.2 主题发展模式.....	37
2.2.3 主题结构分析与连贯之间的关系.....	39
2.3 小结.....	40
 第三章 实证研究设计.....	 42
3.1 研究目的.....	42
3.2 研究方法和数据收集.....	42
3.2.1 研究方法.....	43
3.2.1.1 新旧信息契约的考察方法.....	43
3.2.1.2 主题结构分析的方法.....	43
3.2.2 数据收集.....	45
3.3 数据分析.....	45
3.3.1 实现新旧信息契约的手段.....	45
3.3.1.1 词汇手段.....	45
3.3.1.2 句法手段.....	52
3.3.2 主题结构分析.....	54
3.3.2.1 描写文中的主题发展.....	58
3.3.2.2 记叙文中的主题发展.....	61
3.3.2.3 说明文中的主题发展.....	63
3.3.2.4 议论文中的主题发展.....	65
3.4 小结.....	67

结论.....	69
附录.....	73
参考书目.....	99
致谢.....	102

厦门大学博士论文摘要库

Introduction

Research background

Coherence is an essential quality of good writing, yet it is something difficult to learn and to teach. EFL teachers in the writing classroom tend to refer to “coherence” in abstract terms and do not make much effort to explain and to teach it, or if they do, they would only encourage students to use cohesive devices to establish coherence between sentences. As a result, EFL students have a rather fuzzy and incomplete understanding of textual coherence, always feeling puzzled on how to write a coherent article. Such problems arising in the teaching and learning coherence can be ascribed to the fact that coherence itself is complicated and cannot be simply defined. So far, “there is little consensus on the matter of an overall definition of coherence” (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996: 67).

The early attempts to study coherence emphasized the importance of sentence connections and paragraph structure, and coherence was defined simply in terms of sentence-level connectedness and paragraph unity (Icy Lee, 2002). However, with the emergence of the studies in discourse analysis in the 1960s, especially the development of text-linguistic research, the focus of the study on coherence has shifted from the sentence-level to the discourse-level. Ever since then, the study of coherence has been closely related with the notion of “text”, which has significant implications for the study of writing.

Nils Erik Enkvist (1990) in *Coherence in Writing: Research and Pedagogical Perspectives* identified seven problems in the study of coherence: (1) the relation between cohesion and coherence; (2) messages and metamessages; (3) inference in interpretation; (4) relevance of situational context; (5) receptor knowledge and degrees of interpretability; (6) text strategies, text categories, and patterns of exposition and argument; and (7) strategy, structure, and process. All these seven problems in the study of coherence verify the fact that coherence of a text concerns far beyond the surface signals between sentences; it is also based on the text itself and the reader’s interpretation.

In spite of its complicated nature, coherence has always been of interest to many researchers for a long time and as a result, various theories have been proposed to describe and analyze the coherence of either spoken discourse or written discourse. Among these theories, some have been quite influential; especially Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976), which has aroused great interest in the study of coherence among linguists over the past few decades. (e.g., de Beaugrande, R. & Dressler, W. 1981 van Dijk 1977, Kintsch & van Dijk 1978, Connor 1984, Enkvist 1985)

In line with the study of coherence in linguistics, coherence is also of increasing interest to writing experts and writing researchers, as the concept of coherence in writing has traditionally been accepted as a vital part of writing research and teaching writing.

Theory and research on writing have experienced two stages of development: the product-centered and the process-centered. The product-centered research “stressed expository writing, made style the most important element in writing, and maintained that the writing process is linear, determined by writers before they start to write” (Ulla Connor, 1987: 677). The process-centered research, on the contrary, “focuses on writing processes; teaches strategies for invention and discovery; considers audience, purpose, and context of writing; emphasizes recursiveness in the writing process; and distinguishes between aims and modes of discourse (e.g., expressive, expository, persuasive, and description, narration, evaluation, classification)” (ibid.). In the second approach to teaching composition, writing is considered as a recursive process, students are encouraged to revise their writing product (Connor and Farmer, 1987).

In regard to the approaches to the study of coherence in writing, there also exist two different opinions: text-based coherence and reader-based coherence. The former maintains that coherence is an internal feature of the text. The later, however, claims that coherence depends on the reader's successful processing of the information. (Ann M. Johns, 1986)

Despite the fact that the reader's role has been emphasized, especially recently, in interpreting texts, the text itself is undoubtedly considered of primary importance in

Degree papers are in the "[Xiamen University Electronic Theses and Dissertations Database](#)". Full texts are available in the following ways:

1. If your library is a CALIS member libraries, please log on <http://etd.calis.edu.cn/> and submit requests online, or consult the interlibrary loan department in your library.
2. For users of non-CALIS member libraries, please mail to etd@xmu.edu.cn for delivery details.

厦门大学博硕士论文摘要库